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Advancement of women: implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/141, provides a review of the follow-up and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session. It contains a review of progress made by intergovernmental bodies to incorporate gender equality perspectives into their work, and provides recommendations for further measures to enhance the implementation of gender equality mandates.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to General Assembly resolution 64/141 by presenting an assessment of progress made by intergovernmental bodies in gender mainstreaming and recommendations for further measures to enhance implementation towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. It provides a review of the work of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, the 2009 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions. The analysis of progress considers key achievements, lessons learned and good practices.

2. The report complements the report of the Secretary-General on the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (E/2010/4-E/CN.6/2010/2) and the report on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system (E/2010/57), which focus on actions taken by Members States and the United Nations system respectively.

II. Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: 15 years on

3. The year 2010 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. The General Assembly marked the occasion by holding a commemorative event on 2 March 2010. At its fifty-fourth session in 2010, the Commission on the Status of Women undertook a global review of progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (see E/2010/27). The review emphasized the sharing of experiences and good practices, ways to overcome remaining obstacles, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals, and addressed new challenges such as the global financial and economic crisis. In preparation for the global review, regional reviews were conducted by all five United Nations regional commissions.[1]

4. The Beijing Platform remains the most comprehensive global policy framework for the full realization of gender equality, women's human rights and the empowerment of women and girls. The review demonstrated that important progress had been made in some areas, most notably in global, regional and national policy development and in increased access for women and girls to education at all levels. In addition, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been increasingly used as a framework for action for the promotion of women's human rights. However, disparities remained between regions and within countries across all 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform. Global averages also hid differences among women on the basis of such factors as economic status, ethnicity, age and disability.

5. The Secretary-General's report on the review (E/2010/4) identified remaining gaps, challenges and important milestones that had been missed. For example, while the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly set 2005

[1] Links to the regional reports and outcomes are available from www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/regional_review.html.

as a target for the removal of laws that discriminate against women, many such laws still exist in different countries, and disparities persist between available legislation and its implementation. Similarly, the 30 per cent target of women in decision-making set by the Economic and Social Council in 1990[2] remains unmet, with a global average of 19 per cent women's representation in parliament. Women still outnumber men among the world's poor. They continue to be concentrated in vulnerable and low-paid jobs without social protection, and gender wage gaps persist. Two thirds of illiterate adults are women — a statistic that has not changed in 20 years. There has been very limited progress on reproductive health, with maternal mortality rates remaining unacceptably high. In the area of peace and security, important policy developments over the last few years have not yielded commensurate progress in the implementation of commitments. Violence against women persists worldwide, with a number of States experiencing a rise in the number of reported cases since 2005, despite the priority status it has been afforded in recent years.

6. The review also identified a number of cross-cutting issues in relation to all critical areas of concern that impede progress towards gender equality, including negative attitudes and gender stereotypes; violence against women; the lack of participation of women in decision-making processes; the lack of involvement by men and boys; and the unequal distribution of unpaid work between women and men and its impact on women's employment opportunities and involvement in public life.

7. The review drew attention to the linkages between the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The persistent gaps in implementation of the Platform negatively affect progress in achieving the Goals. With the 2015 target date fast approaching, heightened attention to the gender dimensions of all the Goals is required to scale up and better support and resource positive examples of implementation. Regional and national experiences demonstrate that there are many good and promising practices to build on, from legislative change, policy development and capacity-building, to sector-specific initiatives and efforts to improve data collection.

8. The review identified a set of common strategies that can strengthen and support implementation across the critical areas of concern. It emphasized the role of institutional development and the importance of the gender mainstreaming strategy to ensure that needs and priorities of women and girls, men and boys are systematically incorporated in policies and programmes. The review stressed the need for greater political will and leadership at all levels and the need to increase the capacity of and resources to national mechanisms for gender equality across all sectors. It noted positive trends in the greater application of gender-sensitive indicators and in cooperation between users and producers of statistics, in particular national statistical offices. However, the review also highlighted significant remaining challenges to monitoring implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in particular in terms of methodologies and data collection costs. It concluded that improved analysis, monitoring and reporting tools and instruments are needed, based on the systematic collection and use of sex-disaggregated data. Implementation of strategies and instruments for the improved tracking and

[2] See Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15, para. 7, recommendation VI.

monitoring of allocation of resources and expenditures for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, such as gender-responsive budgeting, was recommended to increase coherence of policy commitments and strengthen transparency.

9. At its fifty-fourth session, the Commission discussed many obstacles and challenges to gender equality and women's empowerment that require urgent and priority attention. It adopted a declaration in which Governments pledged to undertake further action to ensure the full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The documentation to and outcomes of the Commission, including the declaration, were presented to the Economic and Social Council at its 2010 substantive session. Key findings and recommendations were reflected in the Council's ministerial declaration, which was adopted at the conclusion of the high-level segment on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women. It called for stronger action to close implementation gaps in the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The declarations and findings of the 15-year review provide an important contribution to the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held by the General Assembly in September 2010.

III. Attention to gender equality in intergovernmental processes

10. The General Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed its primary and essential role, along with that of the Economic and Social Council and the catalytic role of the Commission on the Status of Women, in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women based on the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session.[3] To advance implementation, the Assembly has called upon all bodies of the United Nations system to fully mainstream a gender perspective into all issues under their consideration and within their mandates. In addition, it has requested that reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies systematically address gender perspectives in order to facilitate gender-sensitive policy development (see General Assembly resolution 64/141, para. 14).

11. This section considers progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women at the international level within the documentation and outputs of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Attention is also paid to the need for enhanced accountability in the implementation of gender-equality commitments at the international, regional and national levels, including through improved monitoring and reporting.

A. General Assembly

12. A review of the work of the General Assembly indicated that there was little change from the previous year with respect to the inclusion of gender-equality

[3] See resolutions 60/140, 61/145, 62/137, 63/159 and 64/141.

issues in its documentation and outputs. At its sixty-fourth session, approximately 30 per cent of the more than 260 resolutions contained references to issues of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Such references ranged from general statements and consideration for specific groups to more in-depth analysis, strategies and action-oriented recommendations for Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders. At the same time, around 50 per cent of the reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly or its subsidiary bodies contained references to gender-equality issues.[4]

13. Gender equality issues were more likely to be referenced in reports and resolutions in certain committees and under certain agenda items. For example, documentation under the headings "Promotion of sustained economic growth and development", "Promotion of human rights" and "Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts" was more likely to include references to gender equality and the empowerment of women than the headings "Maintenance of international peace and security", "Disarmament" and "Organizational and administrative", which included only limited references. The Second and Third Committees were most likely to make specific reference to gender equality issues in their documentation and outcomes. In contrast, the First and Sixth Committees were least likely to include such issues explicitly in their outputs, with only one resolution from both Committees making such a reference (resolution 64/110). Approximately one in three resolutions of the plenary of the General Assembly made reference to gender equality or women's empowerment issues.

1. Issues highlighted in the work of the General Assembly

14. This section provides selected examples of gender-equality issues considered by the General Assembly within and across a variety of agenda items. These issues included women's human rights, violence against women, women in development and the need for improved data collection and analysis.[5]

(a) Women's human rights

15. In its resolution 64/138 on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the General Assembly recognized that the realization of women's human rights is essential to advance development and peace and security. Prominence was given to women's human rights in the consideration of women migrant workers, women and girls with disabilities and the girl child.[6] The Assembly also considered women's human rights in such areas as the promotion of democratization, the elimination of discrimination based on religion or belief and the legal empowerment of the poor.[7] It noted examples of achievements in strengthening women's human rights in national and regional normative and legislative frameworks and encouraged Member States to ratify or accede to various

[4] The reports of the Secretary-General and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session — available in the United Nations Official Document System (ODS) up to mid-June 2010 — were reviewed for content related to mainstreaming the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

[5] See resolutions 64/137, 64/138, 64/139, 64/140, 64/145 and 64/217.

[6] See resolutions 64/145 and 64/166.

[7] See resolutions 64/155 and 64/164 and the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/133).

international instruments to guarantee women's human rights and ensure full compliance with respective obligations.[8]

16. Based on the reports before it, the General Assembly considered legislation and policy adopted by Member States. For example, the African Union gender policy adopted in 2009 committed to a 10-year implementation plan that included legislation for legal protection against discrimination and for ensuring gender equality (A/64/208). The Assembly also received information about policies developed by Member States that focused on increased education and training in women's rights for Government employees and journalists, legal empowerment efforts and legal literacy campaigns for women.[9]

17. To promote women's human rights more effectively, more action should concentrate on access to services and enforcement of rights. For example, in its resolution 64/145 on the girl child, the General Assembly urged States to ensure the right of girls to health care and services, including sexual and reproductive health, and the enforcement of laws on a minimum legal age for marriage. In its resolution 64/139 on violence against women migrant workers, it urged Member States to adopt and implement legislation to protect all women migrant domestic workers and establish mechanisms for investigating and reporting complaints.

(b) Violence against women and girls

18. As it had at its sixty-third session, the General Assembly repeatedly stressed its concern about the continuing prevalence of violence against women and girls in a number of key resolutions. Violence against women violates fundamental freedoms and rights, and impedes social and economic development.[10] The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/64/1) also highlighted women's increased risk of violence owing to their lack of empowerment and social exclusion, and noted that that risk was accentuated in times of economic downturn. The Assembly recognized the special vulnerability of women refugees and migrant workers, women and girls with disabilities, and women and girls with poor access to sanitation.[11] It also noted the prevalence of violence against women in specific Member States.[12]

19. Various reports of the Secretary-General and resolutions of the General Assembly[13] also considered the issue of violence against women, especially sexual violence, in conflict and post-conflict situations. Efforts to address violence against women in those situations focused on fighting the impunity of perpetrators, strengthening investigations and prosecution, and implementing nationally led initiatives to enforce the right of protection against gender-based violence in such situations. Attention was also drawn to efforts to improve data on sexual violence and exploitation in peacekeeping missions and to the development of training manuals and education on the issue for both international and national personnel. In

[8] See resolutions 64/139, 64/145, 64/166 and 64/178.

[9] See A/64/134, A/64/160, A/64/175, A/64/180, A/64/183, A/64/188, A/64/208, A/64/216, A/64/228, A/64/293, A/64/298, A/64/309 and A/64/333.

[10] See resolutions 64/137, 64/139, 64/145 and 64/217.

[11] See resolutions 64/137, 64/139 and 64/145 and the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/169).

[12] See resolutions 64/11, 64/175 and 64/238.

[13] See A/64/1, A/64/163, A/64/183, A/64/228, A/64/254, A/64/298 and A/64/556, and resolutions 64/77, 64/130, 64/137, 64/141 and 64/226.

its resolution 64/76 on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, the Assembly reaffirmed the obligation of all parties in conflict settings to protect civilian populations, taking into account the particular needs of women and children.

20. The report of the Secretary-General on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/64/151) identified such good practices as the development of model frameworks for legislation, assistance and treatment for victims of violence against women, and regional cooperation in the form of observatories and similar monitoring mechanisms. It also highlighted the need for continued efforts in training and capacity-building to support the effective implementation of national laws and policies and care for victims and survivors of violence against women. In its corresponding resolution 64/137, the General Assembly encouraged Member States to join forces in addressing the global pandemic of all forms of violence against women. It also expressed its appreciation for the progress achieved in the Secretary-General's 2008-2015 campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women" and other United Nations initiatives to end violence against women.

21. The report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (A/64/134) stressed the need for Governments to spearhead attitudinal change with regard to traditional and cultural practices of violence against women and manifestations such as early marriages and spousal abuse. Strategies include specific measures targeting men as role models for young men and boys in the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of violence against women and girls (see resolution 64/130).

(c) Women in development

22. The General Assembly has consistently highlighted that gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential to achieving sustained economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable and equitable development.[14] However, there has been mixed progress in implementing gender-related development goals in national development plans. There remains a persistent lack of access by women to essential social services, human and physical capital investments and technology (see A/64/80-E/2009/79).

23. In the labour force, the gaps between women's and men's participation and their respective wages are slowly decreasing; however, significant gender-based occupational segregation persists.[15] Policy design must address specific measures to achieve women's economic empowerment. The report of the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty (A/64/279) noted that, because Government employment protection measures were often based on the stereotype of the male breadwinner and female caregiver, they tended to focus on male-dominated areas of the economy. Social protection measures therefore often failed to take into account the situation of female-headed households.

24. In its resolution 64/217, the General Assembly urged Governments to adopt labour market policies for full employment and decent work and to conduct gender analysis of labour laws, specifically targeting occupational segregation and gender-

[14] See resolutions 64/135, 64/215, 64/217 and 64/218.

[15] See reports of the Secretary-General A/64/61-E/2009/3, A/64/134 and A/64/665.

based wage gaps. It highlighted a range of strategies for the promotion of women's economic empowerment that could be tailored to national circumstances. These include the adoption of legislation and policies that ensure women's equal access to income, land and other assets, and financial resources; the creation of an environment conducive to women entrepreneurs; training, education and information on business practices; and the strengthening of the role and implementation of microfinance and microcredit programmes.

25. Persistent inequalities faced by women in rural areas continue to pose significant challenges to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (see A/64/190). In its resolution 64/140 on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, the General Assembly recognized the critical contribution of rural and indigenous women to enhancing agricultural and rural development and food security. The Assembly called for improved access to resources in on-farm and off-farm production and for legislation to protect valuable innovations, knowledge and practices of women in rural areas, including indigenous women.

26. The report on cooperatives in social development noted the need to promote enhanced involvement of women in agricultural cooperatives and membership in their decision-making bodies (A/64/132). In a number of resolutions, the General Assembly called for greater empowerment of women producers to gain access to national and international markets.[16] The use of agricultural and information and communications technologies such as mobile communications technology can also have significant benefits in terms of productivity and economic empowerment for women in rural areas and women in agriculture.[17]

(d) Data and monitoring

27. The General Assembly recognized the need for enhanced accountability in the implementation of gender-equality commitments through improved monitoring and reporting. It made clear calls to strengthen capacity in the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age and geographical area. Recommendations for such improved data and monitoring capacity were made across different thematic areas, whether directly focused on women,[18] other areas of development or peace and security, and in reports on the implementation of international policy commitments and human rights conventions.[19]

28. The lack of data and monitoring capacity constrains the ability to track progress, design policies, celebrate gains and build on lessons learned. Numerous reports of the Secretary-General emphasized that capacity can be improved through the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated and gender-related data in areas such as sanitation, family and child well-being, social development indicators and good governance, and in improved reporting practices.[20]

29. Different data collection and monitoring strategies were highlighted. The report of the Secretary-General on integrating gender perspectives into national

[16] See resolutions 64/140, 64/217 and 64/224.
[17] See resolutions 64/140 and 64/197 and the report of the Secretary-General A/64/64-E/2009/10.
[18] See resolutions 64/137, 64/139, 64/140, 64/145 and 64/217.
[19] See A/64/327 and A/64/331.
[20] See A/64/134, A/64/169, A/64/172, A/64/204, A/64/306 and A/64/327.

development strategies noted many good practices, such as gender-responsive budgeting techniques for linking gender-equality goals to fiscal priorities and time-use surveys that can be used to design policies to overcome stereotypes and economic and social disincentives, thereby improving gender equality in the distribution of paid and unpaid work (A/64/162 and Corr.1).

30. The development of indicators on violence against women by the Statistical Commission, in collaboration with the Commission on the Status of Women (see chapter III, section B, of the present report and A/64/151) was welcomed and encouraged by the General Assembly.[21] Resolution 64/178 on the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons also recognized the importance of improving comparable sex-disaggregated data on trafficking.

31. Sector-specific strategies for data and monitoring capacities can provide effective targeting and improve policy design. Sustainable progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women requires a stronger data and monitoring framework with robust collection and measurement methodologies.

2. Attention to gender equality at international high-level events

32. During the past year, high-level events and discussions were held on a number of thematic areas, including the Millennium Development Goals, climate change, the global financial and economic crisis, water and reforms for system-wide coherence in the United Nations.[22]

33. The high-level interactive dialogue on water was convened by the President of the General Assembly on World Water Day, 22 March 2010. The interactive panels considered, inter alia, the link between water and gender equality and the empowerment of women. The discussion highlighted the need for women to be more involved in decision-making on water resource management and recognized that women are often the most informed about local water sources. In addition, women and children often suffer the most from lack of water and sanitation in the aftermath of disasters.[23] Access to water and sanitation is a prerequisite for reducing child mortality and enhancing maternal health.[24]

34. In terms of combating and mitigating climate change, although gender-equality issues were considered briefly in the work of the Ad hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action (see FCCC/AWGLCA/2009/14), the outcomes of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen did not include explicit considerations for gender perspectives in any of its decisions (see FCCC/CP/2009/11 and Add.1). Gender perspectives were mentioned in one side-event of the United Nations Development Programme that highlighted the need to consider gender equality goals in adaptation strategies, in particular in terms of the gender-differentiated impacts of natural disasters.

35. At its sixty-fourth session, the General Assembly passed a landmark resolution aimed at improving the system-wide coherence of the United Nations (resolution 64/289). The resolution established the new United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, called UN Women, that consolidates the

[21] See resolutions 64/137 and 64/139.

[22] See www.un.org/ga/president/64/issues/index.shtml.

[23] See www.un.org/ga/president/64/thematic/water/summary.pdf.

[24] See www.un.org/ga/president/64/statements/closingwatere220310.shtml.

mandates and functions of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. For many years, the United Nations has faced serious challenges and gaps in its efforts to promote gender equality globally, including inadequate funding and the absence of a recognized driver. UN Women, which will become operational by January 2011, will strengthen the Organization's ability to support and work with Member States in accelerating progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women.[25]

36. The General Assembly also undertook preparations for the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held in September 2010. The meeting aims to galvanize commitment, rally support and spur collective action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.[26] The report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Keeping the promise: a forward-looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015" (A/64/665), highlighted the challenges and strategies for achieving the Goals, stressing the cross-cutting implications of gender inequality and the need to look at all the Goals through a gender lens.

3. Subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly

(a) Peacebuilding Commission

37. Although the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its third session (A/64/341-S/2009/444) and the report on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/64/217-S/2009/419) did not include a systematic gender analysis, they drew attention to the involvement of women in peace consolidation efforts and addressed gender-based violence in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

38. The Fund engaged partners and national leadership in various projects, including the establishment of Liberia's first-ever unit for the prosecution of crimes of sexual and gender-based violence; support to microfinancing for women entrepreneurs in Côte d'Ivoire; and the strengthening of women's participation as voters and candidates and the provision of gender sensitivity training for male and female elected officials in Burundi's electoral process. The Commission continued to mainstream gender equality issues through country-specific mechanisms. For example, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), the peacebuilding strategic framework for the Central African Republic, adopted on 6 May 2009, commits to implementing systems for the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, including training for security forces and the identification of and support for victims of violence, particularly women.

39. However, such initiatives are still not systematically applied across all countries covered by the Commission or the Fund. Stronger efforts are needed to ensure that policy frameworks and planning instruments provide adequate guidance for implementing commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women; that women are systematically consulted in all planning and prioritization processes; and that their priorities are funded with adequate resources.

[25] See www.unwomen.org.

[26] See http://www.un.org/ga/president/64/issues/mdgs.shtml.

40. The introduction of a gender marker in the 2009 revised Peacebuilding Fund guidelines enabled the Fund to better track gender-related allocations which, as at 12 May 2010, amounted to over $38 million or approximately 23 per cent of the total approved project budget, down from over 30 per cent of the 2009 budget. An estimated 5.9 per cent of the budget was directed to projects designed specifically for women affected by conflict, with a further 6.8 per cent for projects with specific women beneficiaries or gender-related components. An additional 10.3 per cent of the total approved budget was directed to projects containing the inclusion of women and/or gender equality as one of its objectives. However, the Fund is committed to increase allocations in this area, significantly using the gender marker as an entry point to improve gender mainstreaming in projects and to advocate for the increased funding of gender-sensitive projects.

41. The current review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture provides a critical opportunity to build upon the experience gained by the Peacebuilding Commission, in order to further deliver on its gender equality mandate in a deliberate manner, including by advocating for adequate resources and monitoring the implementation of commitments.

(b) Human Rights Council

42. Since 1995, action has intensified on the promotion, protection and realization of women's human rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which marked its thirtieth anniversary in 2009, has increasingly been used as a legal framework for action. States have made progress in carrying out legal reforms, enhancing equality between women and men before the law. Despite such advances, discrimination against women continues in law and in practice across all regions, with many suffering from multiple forms of discrimination and limited access to resources and opportunities. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Human Rights Committee and other United Nations bodies and mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council play a critical role in addressing persistent discrimination and the violation of women's human rights.

43. At its annual full-day discussion on women's human rights in June 2009, the Human Rights Council addressed the theme "Equality before the law: concrete steps to further women's equality". The panel discussion focused on non-discrimination under the law, with a view to identifying concrete steps to greater equality between women and men. Stronger action is needed to repeal discriminatory laws and to effectively address the remaining gaps between legislation and its effective implementation. In follow-up, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 12/17 on the elimination of discrimination against women, in which it called upon States to fulfil their international obligations and commitments to revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex and to remove gender bias in the administration of justice. It also requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a thematic study on discrimination against women, in law and in practice, to be presented at the Council's fifteenth session in September 2010.

44. At its tenth and eleventh sessions in 2009, the Council continued to draw attention to various aspects of gender equality, women's human rights and the empowerment of women, including the administration of justice (resolution 10/2),

the right to food (resolution 10/12) and trafficking in persons (resolution 11/3). In resolution 11/2 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the Council stressed the importance of renewed political will and enhanced efforts to overcome obstacles and challenges faced by States in addressing, preventing, investigating, prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators of all forms of violence against women and girls.

45. The Council also adopted resolution 11/8 on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights. It requested all States to renew their political commitment to eliminating maternal mortality and morbidity and to redouble their efforts to ensure the full and effective implementation of their human rights obligations and global commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The resolution requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a thematic study to identify the human rights dimensions of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity in the existing international legal framework and to recommend options for addressing those dimensions throughout the United Nations system (see A/HRC/14/39).

46. In accordance with resolution 6/30, the Council continued to review the situation of women's human rights in the context of the universal periodic review. Specific recommendations were addressed to Member States to end discrimination against women and enhance the protection of their human rights, namely to amend or repeal laws that do not adequately protect women's rights; combat violence and sexual abuse against women; eliminate female genital mutilation; reinforce protection against early marriage; enact comprehensive laws to address trafficking of women; and increase women's participation in decision-making processes. In September 2009, the Council focused on the universal periodic review in its annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective in its work. The discussion offered further advice on how to consider a gender perspective during the entire universal periodic review process, from national consultations to the review itself, the implementation of recommendations and in media coverage.

B. Economic and Social Council

47. In 2009, while several reports of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions contained gender-sensitive recommendations,[27] less than half the resolutions adopted by the Council at its substantive session incorporated a gender perspective. Moreover, less than a quarter of the decisions and resolutions adopted by functional commissions (excluding the outcomes adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women) incorporated gender perspectives.

1. 2009 session of the Economic and Social Council

48. In recent years, the ministerial declarations of the Economic and Social Council consistently recognized that gender equality and the empowerment of women were critical to the achievement of sustainable development and to

[27] See E/CN.3/2009/9, E/CN.5/2009/2, E/CN.5/2009/3, E/CN.5/2009/4, E/CN.9/2009/3, E/CN.17/2009/4, E/CN.17/2009/5, E/CN.17/2009/6, E/2009/3-A/64/61, E/2009/53, E/2009/72, E/2009/81 and E/2009/87-A/64/84.

combating poverty, hunger and disease. They emphasized the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in such areas as water, sanitation, human settlements and good governance, and of enhancing access by poor women and men to productive assets. In the declarations, the Council reaffirmed the determination of States to protect women's human rights by ensuring equal access to full and productive employment and decent work, and underlined the need for the consistent use of gender mainstreaming across sectors.

49. At the 2009 annual ministerial review, held during the high-level segment, the Council adopted the ministerial declaration "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health" (A/64/3, chapter III, section E). It emphasized the important interrelationship between human rights and global public health, development, poverty eradication and education. While calling for action to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, it stressed the importance of addressing stereotypes and eliminating all harmful practices through concerted efforts to counteract violence against women and girls. It also stressed the importance of developing gender-sensitive multisectoral health policies and programmes to address women's needs. Given the slow progress in achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 on improving child and maternal health, the declaration called on States to renew their commitment to preventing and eliminating child and maternal mortality and morbidity and to strengthening health systems as a key component of an integrated approach. It further called for integrating HIV/AIDS interventions into programmes for primary health care, sexual and reproductive health, and maternal and child health.

50. Under the operational activities segment, resolution 2009/1 on progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system welcomed the performance indicators for gender equality and women's empowerment (the scorecard) developed by the United Nations Development Group. The Council encouraged their systematic use by United Nations country teams and called on the United Nations system to include gender-sensitive indicators in their strategic frameworks.

51. Under the coordination segment, resolution 2009/28 on the role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration on the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development adopted in 2008, the Council requested the United Nations system to continue to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in efforts to ensure the achievement of sustainable development.

52. Under the humanitarian affairs segment, in resolution 2009/3 on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, the Council reiterated the need to mainstream a gender perspective into humanitarian assistance in a comprehensive and consistent manner. The Council requested Member States, relevant United Nations organizations and other relevant actors to ensure that all aspects of humanitarian response addressed the specific needs of women, girls, men and boys, including through improved collection, analysis and reporting of sex- and age-disaggregated data. It urged States to continue to prevent, investigate and prosecute acts of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, in humanitarian emergencies, and called for strengthening support services to victims of such violence.

53. Under the general segment, in resolution 2009/31 on the implementation of the programme of action for the least developed countries for the decade 2001-2010, the Council recognized the important linkages between development, poverty eradication and gender equality. Resolution 2009/12 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system reaffirmed gender mainstreaming as a globally accepted strategy for achieving gender equality and requested the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality to continue to provide practical support to its members in gender mainstreaming.

2. Functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council

54. All the functional commissions incorporated gender perspectives in their work to some extent, including in relation to youth, ageing, reproductive and maternal health, sustainable development, crime, drugs and narcotics, and statistics.

55. The Statistical Commission continued its work on gender statistics and, in decision 40/110, adopted an interim set of indicators on violence against women. It requested further work on existing methodological guidelines for measuring violence against women and called on the United Nations Statistics Division to initiate a trial compilation of national statistics based on the interim set of indicators. The decision also took note of the suggestion to include a general consideration of gender statistics in its agenda.

56. In resolution 47/1 on policies and programmes involving youth, the Commission for Social Development encouraged Member States to collect relevant data, disaggregated by age and gender. It urged Member States to bear in mind the principles of gender balance and non-discrimination when including youth representatives in their delegations to relevant United Nations meetings and conferences. In resolution 47/3 on the first review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, the Commission called upon Member States to adopt measures to promote and protect the rights of older persons while mainstreaming a gender perspective in the decision-making process affecting their lives. It also encouraged funding for research and data-collection initiatives, including on ageing and gender. As in previous years, the resolution on the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/20) welcomed the efforts to mainstream a gender perspective and the empowerment of women in the implementation of the New Partnership.

57. The Commission on Population and Development adopted resolution 2009/1 on the contribution of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. It called for strategies to combat and eliminate gender stereotypes in all spheres of life and actions to achieve equality between women and men in all areas of family responsibility, in sexual and reproductive life and in political life and decision-making. It urged Governments to promote and protect women's and girls' right to education at all levels and to provide young people with comprehensive education on gender equality and on how to deal positively and responsibly with their sexuality. The resolution further urged Governments to make special efforts to strengthen relevant national institutions and mechanisms to generate population data, disaggregated by sex, age and other

categories, for monitoring progress in maternal health, universal access to reproductive health and advances in the empowerment of women and gender equality, and to use such data for the formulation and implementation of population and development policies.

58. In its resolution 17/1 on policy options and practical measures to expedite implementation in agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa, the Commission on Sustainable Development called for the promotion of gender equality by involving women in decision-making in all activities related to rural development. It also called for measures that promote women's access to and ownership of means of production, including land, capital and entrepreneurship.

59. In its resolution 2009/8, the Economic and Social Council made a series of recommendations for consideration by national Governments, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. One of the recommendations adopted by the Commission was to expand opportunities, especially for women, in science, technology and engineering education and research, in particular in the emerging technologies. The Council also recommended that the Commission should provide a forum to share best practices and information on new technologies, financing mechanisms and regulatory measures for broadband connectivity, as well as access strategies and technologies to supplement broadband Internet access, with a focus on reaching women and rural communities.

60. In the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, adopted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, States committed to ensuring that drug control policies, measures and interventions took into account the specific needs and circumstances that women faced with regard to drug problems. They decided to undertake effective measures to ensure that women, as well as men, had access to and benefited equally and without discrimination from, drug control policies and strategies by involving them actively in all stages of programme and policy development and implementation. The Plan of Action called on Member States to ensure that a broad range of drug demand reduction services responded best to the needs of vulnerable groups, taking into account gender considerations. In its resolution on promoting international cooperation in addressing the involvement of women and girls in drug trafficking, especially as couriers (52/1), the Commission stressed the importance of collecting and analysing data disaggregated by sex and age and of conducting research on related gender issues. It requested the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to carry out scientific research and analysis on activities related to drug trafficking involving women and girls at the national and international levels. The Commission also adopted a resolution on the use of pharmaceutical technology to counter drug-facilitated sexual assault ("date rape") (resolution 52/8).

61. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice adopted resolution 18/1 on supplementary rules specific to the treatment of women in detention and in custodial and non-custodial settings. It invited States to take into consideration the specific needs and circumstances of women in detention and in custodial and non-custodial settings when developing relevant legislation, procedures, policies and action plans. It encouraged States to collect, maintain, analyse and publish data on women in detention and in custodial and non-custodial settings for the purpose of

enhancing correctional policies and best practices. It also requested UNODC to convene an open-ended intergovernmental expert group meeting in 2009, to develop supplementary rules specific to the treatment of women in detention and in custodial and non-custodial settings. Accordingly, the expert group meeting submitted the outcome of its work to the Twelfth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2010. In its resolution on supporting national and international efforts for child justice reform, in particular through improved coordination in technical assistance (resolution 2009/26), the Economic and Social Council urged States to pay particular attention to the issue of child justice, taking into account the age, gender, social circumstances and development needs of such children.

62. At its fifty-third session, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted agreed conclusions on the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS (see E/2009/27). They contained a set of policy recommendations on a broad range of areas, including labour and social policies, the provision of services and infrastructure, caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS, the elimination of gender stereotypes, data collection and research, and international cooperation. In its discussions on the priority theme and related topics on its agenda, the Commission recognized that gender inequality and discrimination contribute to the continuing imbalance in the division of labour between women and men, and noted the need to change the gender-based division of labour in order to fully integrate women into the formal economy and to ensure women's equal participation in public and political life. The persistence of gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes regarding the roles of women and men was also considered to be a significant barrier to achieving equal participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels. In the face of current global challenges, the Commission expressed its deep concern over the negative impact of the global financial and economic crisis, which could hamper progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. At the session, the Commission adopted a number of resolutions, including on its future organization and methods of work, which outlined new priority themes for the period 2010-2014 (Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/15).

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

63. The General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies and the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions paid attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls across a range of different thematic areas of work. Considerable attention was given to issues linked to women's human rights, violence against women and the role of women in development. Overall, however, gender equality considerations appeared in only a limited number of resolutions of intergovernmental bodies and in only approximately half of the reports of the Secretary-General. As in previous years, despite the recognition of the importance of mainstreaming gender equality considerations, such attention was disproportionately concentrated in development-related agendas and not uniformly addressed across the spectrum of work of the Assembly and the Council.

64. There is a need to improve the explicit inclusion of the goal of gender equality into all the documentation and the work of intergovernmental bodies, to accelerate

the implementation of commitments on gender equality, women's human rights and the empowerment of women. The slow and uneven progress in implementation has direct and serious negative impacts on the lives of women and girls and on the achievement of global goals and commitments across the areas of peace and security, development and human rights. Stronger efforts are required to address persistent gaps and challenges and obstacles to implementation.

65. There is a continued need for institutional development for gender equality and the empowerment of women supported by data and research, adequate and sustainable resources and effective accountability mechanisms. The call for improved statistical and monitoring capacities for the systematic collection and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators has been clear and consistent in the work of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the majority of the Council's functional commissions. The lack of adequate data impedes progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, and limits the ability of Member States to improve institutional mechanisms, design better policies and tailor relevant and more effective strategies to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of their populations. Increased investment in data collection and analysis at the global, regional and national levels is required.

66. Many good practices and recommendations for the further implementation of actions towards gender equality and the empowerment of women have been discussed in the work of intergovernmental bodies, including in connection with the 15-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. One continuing challenge, however, is the capacity of intergovernmental bodies, Governments, United Nations entities and other stakeholders to share expertise, experience and knowledge and scale up good and promising practices in different sectors and areas. The work by the Statistical Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women on indicators on violence against women is a good example of inter-commission exchanges and collaboration. In addition, models for information-sharing and knowledge management, such as the Secretary-General's database on violence against women, could be extended to other gender equality and women's empowerment issues. Enhanced use of tools such as score cards and resource tracking systems like the gender marker can also significantly contribute to more gender-responsive programmes and results at the country level.

67. The year 2010 has provided multiple opportunities for strengthening political commitment and leadership at all levels and across sectors towards the full achievement of internationally agreed goals and commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission on the Status of Women's 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council's annual ministerial review identified further actions to accelerate progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. The high-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals in September 2010 will provide an opportunity to commit to the actions needed to meet the goals by 2015, especially those actions related to gender equality, which underpin the progress of all the Goals. Efforts to systematically integrate gender-equality perspectives into peace and security issues can also be reinforced during the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in the fall of 2010.

68. The establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN Women, by the General Assembly in July 2010, marks an important turning point that will significantly boost the Organization's ability to support and work with Member States in accelerating progress towards achieving the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women will work for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security.

69. **Taking into account the critical role of intergovernmental bodies in promoting and monitoring progress in the achievement of global commitments on gender equality, the General Assembly may wish to:**

(a) **Strengthen efforts to enhance accountability with respect to the implementation of gender-equality commitments at the international, regional and national levels, including by improved monitoring and reporting on progress in relation to policies, strategies, resource allocations and programmes;**

(b) **Encourage Member States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations and other relevant actors to prioritize the strengthening of data collection and monitoring capacities, at international, regional and national levels, through multisectoral efforts and partnerships;**

(c) **Request that reports submitted to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies facilitate gender-sensitive policy development, through qualitative gender analysis, sex-disaggregated data and concrete recommendations for further action;**

(d) **Ensure that gender perspectives are mainstreamed in the preparation, implementation and follow-up of all United Nations conferences, summits and high-level meetings, including in documentation, interactive events and outcomes, and such upcoming events as the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 ("Rio plus 20");**

(e) **Encourage the Committees of the General Assembly and the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council to hold periodic thematic discussions on progress made in mainstreaming gender perspectives into their work.**